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THE SOWER\
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Ron Bartanen, Evangelist'

THE ROAD INTO LOVE AND PATIENCE

“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 3:5)

Have you ever found yourself in unfamiliar territory, unsure of what road to turn on to get to your desired destination? If so, join the crowd. While it is disturbing to be in such a predicament, it is tragic to be spiritually confused, uncertain of what lies ahead. This can be the plight even of Christians who have begun the journey on the Christian Way, as indicated by Paul in writing to the believers in Thessalonica whom he has commended for their “faith and patience” while enduring persecution (1:4).

While Paul is obviously not denying their love for God, or their patient endurance, yet he saw the need to desire for them divine direction into both. Were they not already in the love of God and patience? Yes, and no. To illustrate, a man may take a plane from London to New York City, and may phone his family, informing them that he is now in the United States. However, as a Midwesterner I would say he needs to leave NYC, and go on into the United States because there’s a lot more to see than what NYC can offer. When we come in to the love of God, we do not stop our journey. It’s then just begun.

How extensive is the love of God? One of our songs expresses it in these words: “The love of God is greater far,/Than tongue or pen can ever tell:/It goes beyond the highest star,/And reaches to the lowest hell.:" In the storms of life, God would direct us into the sanctuary of His love.

Likewise, the “patient waiting for Christ” does not end when one rises from the waters of baptism. We do not sit down, gazing into the clouds as we await His return for us. Jesus warns His followers to not be found sleeping at His coming (Matt. 24:36), but faithful in watching and

praying, even as tribulation in the world worsens, saying, “Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).

The road into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ will not end until that day we stand in His presence. Are you letting Him lead you into His love and steadfast patience?
--Ron

“**THE ISSUE** today is the same as it has been throughout history: whether man shall be allowed to govern himself or be ruled by a small elite.” (*Thomas Jefferson*)

“**Government** is not reason; it’s not eloquence; it is force. Like fire, it’s a dangerous servant and a fearful master.” (*George Washington*)

CHAOTIC CHRISTIANITY

“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and by empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.— Colossians 2:8 ESV

God does not consult with you to determine His plan or purpose: it is your responsibility to consult with Him. You must be in His will: He has made no provision to be in your will. Our prayers can be answered as we understand this principle.

When self is on the throne of our lives, we can be sure that chaos will be the norm, no matter how religious or sincere we are. Chaos is a sure sign that we have not been with Jesus. Chaotic Christianity distorts the image of the living Savior.

The flesh desires to conquer the cross, ignore it, and disregard Christ’s Lordship. The cross desires to conquer the flesh and eradicate its lordship!

How heartbreaking it is when we settle for tradition. When habits are formed, all too often, hunger is lost. Your hunger for God is the greatest indication of who is on the throne in your life.
—Mike Evans, Jerusalem

MORE THAN JUST BEING GOOD

“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius . . . a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:2, NKJV).

If you aren’t being good, repent – quickly! And bring forth the fruit of repentance by mending your ways. God wants you to be good. Of that there is no doubt.

But is “being good” all God requires? If ever there was a “good” man, Cornelius certainly was. As to “goodness,” few, if any, of us could hold a candle to him. He was a “devout” (i.e. religious) man. And he directed his devotion toward the right object: he “feared God” (i.e. he held God in reverence). Not only that, but he led his household in that same worshipful devotion. Then our text tells us he “gave alms generously to the people.” While Cornelius was a Gentile, his charity was directed toward Jews (“the people” is used in contrast to the Gentiles). Finally, Cornelius “prayed to God always.”

What a good man! God Himself took note of him: “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4). So Cornelius must have been saved, right? No, that would be wrong! God’s holy angel told him to “send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved” (Acts 11:13-14). Good as he was, Cornelius was lost! Unlike so many today, however, Cornelius wasn’t trusting in his own goodness. When Peter taught him the gospel, he believed and obeyed (Acts 10:44-48).

Jesus taught that many sincere, “good,” religious people will be lost on Judgment Day. “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then will declare to them, ‘I never knew you: depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:22-23).

Doing His will includes being “good”; but goodness won’t cleanse you from sin. Only Jesus’ blood can do that when you, like Cornelius, believe and obey the gospel, and then “walk in the light” with Jesus (1 John 1:7).

--Joe Slater, Austin, TX, via *Bulletin Gold*

“STANDING ON THE PROMISES—JESUS’ PROMISE TO RETURN” (Part 2) will be today’s message, with Matthew 24:36-44 for the reading.

IN OUR PRAYERS: Little Ruby Bradd (Clinton; cancer). *** Wayne Polk, minister at Shelbyville, is in St. John's Hospital in Spring-field with blood clots in both legs. *** My vision is much improved following cataract surgeries. Thanks for your prayers.